

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 and 19-21 are pending in this application. Claims 1-9 and 20 are rejected; and claims 19 and 21 are objected to. Claims 19 and 21 are amended hereby. Claims 10-18 have been previously withdrawn.

Responsive to the rejection of claims 1-9 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being obvious by U.S. Patent No. 5,902,011 (Hand et al.) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,033,133 (Nissen) and U.S. Patent No. 5,190,348 (Colasanti), Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection submit that claims 1-9 and 20 are now in condition for allowance.

Hand et al. '011 discloses an office chair 210 with an adjustable lumbar support 10 (Figs. 12 and 15). Lumbar support 10 (Figs. 1-6) includes two inflatable bladders 14 interconnected by fluid distribution conduit 16 disposed therebetween and inflation conduit 18 connected to fluid distribution conduit 16 (column 4, line 65 through column 5, line 2). A pumping element (not shown) may be connected by tube or hose 34 to inflation conduit 18 to provide a way to adjustably inflate bladders 14 to the desired pressure (column 5, lines 16-18). A face panel 20 is secured to one side of bladders 14 to provide an interface between the bladders and the user's back (column 5, lines 5-7). Medial portion 30 of face panel 20 has a greater degree of flexibility than outer end portions 32 thereof to enable the face panel to flex at its medial portion to thereby relieve pressure to a user's spine and to conform to the curvature of one's back (column 5, lines 7-11). Form stable outer end portions 32 distribute the pressure exerted by bladders 14 against the user's back, and a generally rectangular rear panel 22 is secured to the other side of bladders 14 to provide a form stable support for the bladders (column 5, lines 11-15).

Nissen '133 discloses an inflatable seat cushion (Figs. 1 and 3) including a compressible core 13 within an inner cover 14 and an outer cover 16. Core 13 is preferably constructed from an

open celled polyurethane foam material (column 3, lines 65-66). Valve 19 allows a person to selectively open and close off tube 15 to atmospheric access to the space within inner cover 14 (column 5, lines 26-29).

Colasanti '348 discloses support device 10 (Figs. 1 and 2) including mounting plate 20, memory plate 22, bladder 24 and element 26 for regulating air flow (column 2, lines 55-57). Memory plate 22 has upper end 30, middle portion 32 and lower end 34 (column 3, lines 9-11). Bladder 24 has front panel 38 and a plurality of collapsible sides, shown as 40, 41, 42 and 43 (column 3, lines 26-28). Memory plate 22 is enclosed within bladder 24 (column 3, line 40). In another embodiment (Figs. 5-7) after memory plate 222 and bladder 224 have been connected, lower portion 256 and upper portion 258 of bladder 224 are sealed together, effecting an airtight seal with memory plate 222 shown within bladder 224 (column 6, lines 14-17 and Figs. 6 and 7).

In contrast, claim 1, as previously amended, recites in part: “ a plurality of air bladders mounted between said support surface and said flexible support member . . .”. (Emphasis added). Applicants submit that such an invention is neither taught, disclosed or suggested by Hand et al. '011, Nissen '133 and Colasanti '348, or any of the other cited references, alone or in combination, and includes distinct advantages thereover.

Hand et al. '011 discloses a lumbar support including a back plate provided for each side of an air inflatable bladder with a mounting arm that terminates in a hook which is slid over the edge of a cantilevered back support. Nissen '133 discloses an inflatable seat cushion including a compressible core within an inner cover and an outer cover and connected to a valve. Colasanti '348 discloses support device including a memory plate within the bladder. Applicant's respectfully submit that the Examiner's argument at page 3 of the Office Action is in error in that ends 34, 36 of Colasanti '348 are associated with memory plate 22 which is within bladder 24

having sides collapsible sides 40, 41, 42 and 43. The claimed structure of the present invention is not shown in any of the cited references, including Colasanti '348. None of the cited references disclose or suggest a plurality of air bladders mounted between the support surface and the flexible support member.

All claim limitations must be taught or suggested in order to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness (MPEP 2143.03), and the Examiner has failed to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness in that the claim limitation of “a plurality of air bladders mounted between said support surface and said flexible support member” is neither taught nor suggested by the cited references.

The present invention as set forth by amended claim 1 has distinct advantages over Hand et al. '011, Nissen '133 and Colasanti '348 and the other cited references. An advantage of the present invention is the air bladders have a better support by being held between the support surface and a flexible support member. Another advantage is the air bladder system may either be made a permanent or a temporary part of a given article of furniture.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that claim 1, and claims 2-9 and 20 depending therefrom, are now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

At page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner has indicated that claims 19 and 21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, for which courtesy the Examiner is thanked. Claim 19 is rewritten to include the limitations of original claim 1. Claim 21 is rewritten to include the limitations of original claims 1 and 20.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that claims 19 and 21 are now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that no combination of the cited references teaches, discloses or suggests the subject matter of the amended claims. The pending claims are therefore in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of all rejections and allowance of the claims.

In the event Applicants have overlooked the need for an extension of time, an additional extension of time, payment of fee, or additional payment of fee, Applicants hereby conditionally petition therefor and authorizes that any charges be made to Deposit Account No. 20-0095, TAYLOR & AUST, P.C.

Should any question concerning any of the foregoing arise, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (260) 897-3400.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to:  
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